

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 12496 071541Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11 /062 W
-----046904 071815Z /53

P R 071330Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4055
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: PARTY SECRETARIES MEETING FAILS TO BREAK PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION DEADLOCK

REF: ROME 12347

1. NINE DAYS AFTER THE BALLOTING BEGAN ON JUNE 29, THE THIRTEENTH ATTEMPT TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT TOOK PLACE ON THE MORNING OF JULY 7. IT HAD BEEN DOOMED TO FAILURE FROM THE START. A SECOND MEETING OF THE SIX-PARTY SECRETARIES OF THE SO-CALLED "CONSTITUTIONAL ARC" HAD ENDED LATE ON JULY 6 IN COMPLETE DISAGREEMENT. THE POLITICAL CONSENSUS NEEDED TO ELECT A NEW PRESIDENT STILL ELUDES THE PARTIES.

2. AS LONG AS ALL THE THREE PRINCIPAL VOTING BLOCKS (DC, PCI, LAY PARTIES) REMAIN UNPREPARED TO ELECT A PRESIDENT NOT SUPPORTED BY THE OTHERS, EACH OF THE GROUPINGS HOLDS AN EFFECTIVE VETO IN THE SELECTION

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PROCESS. AS OF JULY 7, THE PARTIES HAVE TAKEN THE FOLLOWING POSITIONS, EFFECTIVELY CHECKMATING THE CANDIDATES WHO HAVE EMERGED SO FAR:

DC PCI PSI PSDI PRI PLI

PERTINI (PSI; WITHDRAWN) NO YES YES YES YES NO

GIOLITTI (PSI)	NO	YES	YES	YES	---	---
VASSALI (PSI; WITHDRAWN)	YES	NO	YES	YES	---	---
DC CANDIDATE (UNDESIGNATED)	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
LA MALFA (PRI)	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
ROSSI (PSDI)	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES
BOZZI (PLI)	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES

3. IN RESPONSE TO THE DEMAND OF THE LAY PARTIES (SUPPORTED BY THE PCI AT LEAST TACTICALLY) FOR THE ELECTION OF A LAY PRESIDENT, THE DC SIAD IT IS PREPARED TO VOTE FOR LA MALFA, ROSSI, VASSALI OR BOZZI--REPRESENTATIVES OF EACH OF THE FOUR LAY PARTIES. ON THE SURFACE, THE DC'S POSITION IS POLITICALLY IMPECCABLE. IN PRACTICE, HOWEVER, EACH OF THE FOUR CANDIDATES NOMINATED BY THE DC IS NON-GRATA TO ONE OR MORE OF THE OTHER PARTIES. THUS, THE SEARCH FOR A "CONSENSUS/ CANDIDATE GOES ON WITH THE INCREASING LIKELIHOOD THAT THE DC WILL ANNOUNCE ITS OWN CANDIDATE AT SOME POINT IN ORDER TO BREAK THE DEADLOCK. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT THE DC'S STRATEGY IS DIRECTED TO THIS END. THERE IS NO EVIDENCE, HOWEVER, THAT THE DC HAS YET COME TO ANY INTERNAL AGREEMENT ON A CANDIDATE OF ITS OWN. THE ONLY CLEAR ELEMENT AT THE MOMENT IS THE LACK OF AGREEMENT AMONG THE PARTIES, A FACTOR WHICH IS INCREASING POLITICAL TENSIONS AND EXASPERATING PUBLIC OPINION.GARDNER

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